MLA R Café Presentation Outline/Script

May 20, 2024

[R Café at UMass Chan]

Tess: Presenting the R Café at UMass Chan

Tess: Co-led by Tess Grynoch, Research Data and Scholarly Communications Librarian, and

Ben: Ben Gerber, Chief of the Division of Health Informatics and Implementation Science and Health Services Researcher

Mary: For our non-UMass Chan audience here today, can you describe what the R Café is?

[What is R Café?]

B: Sure, it's a gathering of R users at UMass Chan Medical School. We meet monthly online or in-person to share skills and cool projects, troubleshoot code, and ask questions.

T: We started in June 2022 and have had 16 gatherings so far with an attendance ranging from 6 to 31 people. With a usual meeting having about 9 people at it besides the host.

[Topics covered]

B: So far we've covered a range of topics from introductions to various R packages to best practices like keeping code DRY (Don't Repeat Yourself) and creating reproducible questions.

[How did the partnership come about?]

T: So, how did this all come about? Let's set the scene. Dr. Ben Gerber starts working at UMass Chan Medical School September 2021. Having a deep respect for libraries (perhaps instilled by his wife –

B: hi, Rebecca!

T: he asked for a tour of the library

B: Hey Mary, could I bother you for a tour of the Lamar Soutter Library?

Mary: Of course, it's just too bad that Tess is not here in the office today. She's our resident R coder and leading our NIH Data Management and Sharing Policy response.

[aside] Tess, email Ben. He's interested in teaching R and the new NIH DMS policy.

T: Hi Ben, sorry I missed your visit. Let's meet!

[Ben, what were you looking for from the library?]

T: [to Ben] Ben, what were you looking for from the library when you reached out?

B: Interested in institutional and data repositories, NIH grant requirements [Adlib]

- Stability and structure [Adlib]
    - Existing connections and broader view (outside department) [Adlib]
- Knowledge of electronic resources and administering access [Adlib]
- Centralized location [Adlib]

T: We return to UMass Chan a couple weeks later as Tess approaches Ben's office prepared with NIH DMS policy talking points and excited to talk about teaching R.

T: [to Ben] Hi Ben, it's nice to meet you!

B: You as well!

T: My colleagues mentioned that you're interested in the NIH Data Management and Sharing Policy? That's what's taking up all my energy these days.

B: I'm also interested in teaching R and championing its use for reproducible research. I use R a lot in my own research and have taught R for medical students and residents at my previous institution.

T: I'm also interested in teaching R. We don't have a computer science department and the only R class that I know of is the bootcamp for the first year PhD students. I also taught an intro R class in 2019 and there was a lot of interest. Wow! Look at the time I need to get to my next meeting! Let's keep the discussion going over email.

[Time passing voice] Six months later...

[Ben, what did the library bring to the partnership?]

B: Tess, remember the R interest group we talked about, I want to get it started, would you be interested in co-leading it with me?

T: Yes, I would be happy to help in any way that I can. I know of some similar groups at other institutions like the Biodata Club at Oregon Health Sciences University that was presented by Robin Champieux at the Medical Library Association in 2020.

B: I have some ideas on what we could cover and who we might want to reach.

T: Awesome, here's all the places I usually advertise my workshops and the deadlines for each platform.

B: I see you also have a GitHub repository for your intro-R class. I can fork your repository and add future code from the group to the new GitHub repository. If we ever present about the interest group at a conference together, we can also use R and GitHub to collaborate on our presentation and put the link to the GitHub repository on the slide. Do you think we should hold our first session in-person or online?

T: The best way to reach the most people is probably still going to be Zoom at this point and we'll be able to record the sessions this way too. I'm happy to edit the videos recordings afterwards to make sure the captions are accurate.

B: Someone mentioned to me that DataCamp Classrooms are free for students and educators. I can set up the classroom but I don't have time to add group members to it.

T: I can manage access, I have experience managing access for some of our library systems.

B: It would also be great to have a central web presence for the group.

[R Café webpage]

T: LibGuides is great for that! I can create a private guide for the group to host our meeting information, resources, and recordings.

What do we want to call our R interest group? Meeting of the R Minded, RUM – R at UMass, R Café, R Minds on R, R Salon, UMass Chan R Collaborative?

B: Let's go with R Café!

T: [Narrator] Returning to present day…

B: Looking back at the project so far, what has worked well?

T: The blending of expertise has really worked in our favor. Ben has a lot of experience working in R and applying it to medical research.

B: And Tess has experience in program planning at UMass Chan. Having a central online location has also been great for making materials available in a central place.

T: Holding the gatherings monthly and advertising each one has been great. The repeated messaging means we're reaching the academic audience that is constantly changing and led to growing awareness of the group.

B: For others that are considering a similar project, what takeaways would you share from the collaboration?

T: Good communication with check-ins before/after gatherings [Adlib]

B: Centralized materials and outputs [Adlib]

T: Being flexible: [Adlib]

- In-person –> Online

- Quarterly –> Monthly

- Giving time for people to do their own coding –> All demo and questions

— Been difficult to recruit presenters so we've done a lot of the presentations ourselves

[Tess, what are your tips for partnering with the research community?]

B: Tess, what are your tips for partnering with the research community?

T: As we highlighted in our takeaways, communication is key so find out what form of communication works best for the researcher or researchers you are working with.

- Ben and I best communicate over email and short meetings.
- Other researchers are easiest to reach through messaging platforms like Slack and Microsoft Teams, in-person meetings, or department meetings.
- Administrators are your friends; they will help you find time to meet with researchers and have a broader view of what competing priorities a researcher may have and know when to best communicate with a researcher.
- Also, Researchers are busy people; so plan a lot lead time for meetings so you can get them on their calendar.

[Ben, what advice would you give librarians for working with researchers?]

T: Ben, what advice would you give librarians for working with researchers?

B: 3 things. Communication [Adlib]

— Be proactive in anticipating needs and follow up [Adlib]

— Brief communications preferable to long meetings [Adlib]

- Provide structure [Adlib]

— Centralized resources [Adlib]

— Regular meeting times [Adlib]

- Find common interest [Adlib]

— Passion for training students and trainees [Adlib]

— Innovation and creativity [Adlib]

[Ben, what would you tell your colleagues about working with the library?]

T: And Ben, what would you tell your colleagues about working with the library?

B: Lucky to have a wonderful library (with wonderful librarians) [Adlib]

- Librarians up to date on policies (e.g., data sharing) [Adlib]

- Colleagues under-utilize (don't know library resources) [Adlib]

[Other collaborations that arose from this project]

T: I'm happy to say that our initial meeting and ongoing collaboration has spun out into a lot of other projects.

B: All of Us Research Workbench [Adlib]

T: NIH Data Management and Sharing Policy Support [Adlib]

B: Data Science rotation for the Clinical Informatics Fellowship [Adlib]

T: U-Match website for listing available research projects for UMass Chan students [Adlib]

[R/Medicine]

B: R/Medicine [Adlib]

[Questions? Contact us]

B: Glad we could share our experiences and collaboration with you today, especially on the R Café.

T: Thank you, everyone for listening. Ben and I are happy to take any questions at the end of the session or if you think of questions later, feel free to email us using the emails in the slides.