The Cyberinfrastructure Landscape: Organizations

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To give you a bit of an idea where I come from in all of this, my LinkedIn bio that has all the fancy language about decades of experience supporting engineering research really comes down to this:

I'm a self-diagnosed high-functioning ADHD guy who probably should have studied more than he helped people in computer labs.

I lucked into a couple of co-op years at Oak Ridge National Lab doing a mix of CAD support, Unix systems administration, and actual engineering.

That eventually turned into a bunch of degrees from my original university, which I like to call a masters in shaking things and a PhD in breaking things.

I stayed on as an R&D engineer in a research center, and then as the first campus-wide HPC systems administrator in central IT.

I'm a member of way too many RCD community groups, been on the Campus Champions leadership team for nearly 2 years, and I'm a compulsive advice giver and rabbit-hole-chaser.

So for the folks who don't have a lot of time for the rest of this talk, or for the new folks that may be overwhelmed by RCD, let me go ahead and get you what others have called the starter pack of RCD organizations and conferences where you can find other communities and resources as you need them.

The first one is Campus Champions: this was the second RCD community that I joined about 5 years ago, the one that introduced me to Henry and other folks via the Virtual Residency.

Campus Champions is one of the longest-running RCD communities, starting around 2008 and formerly funded by NSF's Extreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment (XSEDE). It currently has over 800 members from every state, and it includes folks from every RCD role: facilitators, software engineers, systems administrators, etc.

We've got an active mailing list and fairly active Slack, with two regularly-scheduled calls each month. One call has a specific topic and an invited speaker, while the other one is a more free-flowing community chat over any topic of interest to the attendees. Sometimes we start with something hot from the mailing list, other times from recent news items.

One other advantage to Campus Champions is that even though we don't have direct ties to XSEDE's followup project, ACCESS, the ACCESS team does provide Campus Champions extra insight into their institutions' usage of ACCESS resources, which can help you guide your researchers toward more efficient usage or more suitable locations for their work.

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Another catch-all group similar to Campus Champions is the Campus Research Computing Consortium, or CaRCC.

CaRCC has a pretty comprehensive structure of tracks, interest groups, and working groups. These are all ad hoc and community driven, and the tracks tend to have one Zoom call per month with a lot of behind the scenes coordination going on.

The biggest thing I'll applaud CaRCC for is their ongoing and invaluable work in professionalization of the RCD field, which helps translate RCD roles into job family matrices that I've used at Tennessee Tech, the RCD Nexus organization that puts together workshops and papers on workforce development and benchmarking your organization against others, and the RCD Capabilities Model to assist with that benchmarking and also with identifying the priorities for improving your organization.

Now those organizations are all virtual, no cost to join, and extremely welcoming and accessible to new folks.