Combined reproducibiliTea and UKRN network – 11 May 2021

In the first (reproducbiliTea) part we discussed the paper https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6513108/pdf/pbio.3000246.pdf which focuses on Early Career Researchers but has worthwhile challenges and benefits for every researcher.

Challenges:

1. Restrictions on flexibility (but still far too much flexibility)
2. The time cost.
3. Incentive structure isn't in place yet.

Benefits

1. Greater faith in research (but the more we know the less we know).
2. New helpful systems (agree).
3. Investment in your future (casualisation!).

Several themes were mentioned, including confirmatory versus exploratory research, the provisional character of all research, the 'pipeline' of research, the structure of PhDs, transparency and funding.

Discussion - network

The discussion by the local network focused mainly on how our Southampton group can prioritise and develop its activities.

- The point was made that events can promote transparent research practices, as well as act as a meeting place for like-minded researchers, across disciplines. Examples could be to organise a 'Festival of open research', linking up with the NCRM and/or to create prizes to incentivise work. It was noted we don't have to reinvent the wheel and can look at leading universities on this (Reading, Surrey, Manchester).
- We could look at enshrining our views in 'position statements' that contribute to an overall vision. Again, we should also look at examples from other universities for this.
- A comment was made that even if there are strong policies in place already, support for 'good transparent and open science practices' are key. There is a risk that practices remain fragmented and to prevent this we need to look at Open Science as a whole.
- One comment in chat was made "However, based on the question posed, I would say that the case for open research is well made for fostering collaboration, improving readership and reuse etc., but the problem I often hear about is that while we might value open research practices at Southampton, the next employer might not, so it's better to publish closed in the 'high impact' journal than it is to publish in the most open and most appropriate journal. So, it's my opinion that we need to look outwards and lead. I would like any initiatives we get involved in to be more global than local.". Initiating such initiatives seem a thread through many of the points raised.
- It was noted that some incentives could also run through supporting services in the university. For example, via ethics on sharing data (comply or explain), and data management. Or via finance and RIS, for example by providing guidelines for time and resources for open practices (e.g. add £10k for an RA for one day for three months for making data 'publish-proof'). Or for example via an uptick for open practices in internal peer review.

- For communication to the 'outside world' it was mentioned that best practices could be collected and communicated on a website. This linked nicely with some steps having been made to have a dedicated blog and a more professionally run mailing list.
- Research training and culture also is important in Open practices with the motto 'act as if you are going to share it tomorrow'. Practices should be anchored in more formal schooling as well. Again, we should look at best practices from other thriving communities of practices (e.g. Bristol, Cambridge). It is important to link this up with Graduate schools/Doctoral Colleges.
- We concluded with summarising some short-term concrete actions, pertaining to: providing resources, providing case examples of effective open practices on a website/wiki, disciplinary, faculty and open practices champions.

We will take these points forward to the Steering Group and work on some concrete points in the coming year.