

The DRCP and McMaster's Evolving Digital Research Support Landscape



Fall 2023 Feedback and Engagement Sessions

Digital Research Commons Pilot (DRCP) | AskResearch.McMaster.ca | AskResearch@McMaster.ca

View this presentation at u.mcmaster.ca/drcp-currentstate

Overview

- ❖ About the DRCP
- ❖ Current state of digital research support: Findings
- ❖ Feedback and next steps





Digital Research Commons Pilot

- A 3-Year Office of the Provost Strategic Alignment Fund-funded project
- Co-sponsored by the
 - Office of the Vice-President, Research (OVPR)
 - McMaster University Library (MUL), and
 - Office of the Associate Vice President (AVP) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

Vision

To build a more connected, capable, and researcher-focused approach to digital research support, which will improve access to systems, services, software, and training for researchers across the institution.





What is digital research support?

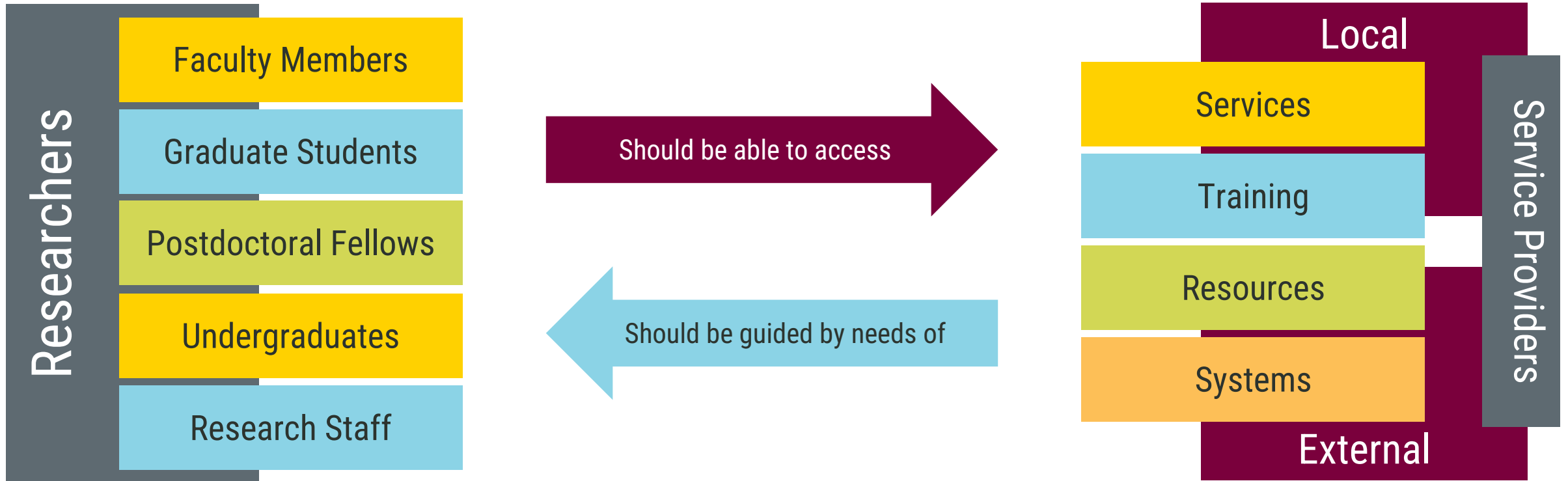
Digital research support (DRS) includes the digital technologies, as well as associated services, resources, systems, and people that work together to enable scholarly activity.

Digital research support providers facilitate access to systems, services, software, and the necessary expertise to use digital technologies effectively.

"As a researcher, I use digital resources and technologies to complete my research."

"As a digital research support provider, I help researchers find, access, and use digital resources and technologies."





Mission

The DRCP will build into and around existing digital research support, so that:

- ❖ Researchers can easily find and use the services, systems, training, and resources they need to succeed in their research.
- ❖ Service providers and support units can collaborate to identify support gaps and develop complementary and shared services that meet the diverse needs across campus.





The DRCP Team

Operations

Admin

Jay Brodeur
Angela Di Nello
Tracy Dallaire
Ranil Sonnadara

Matthew Burns
Ratika Sharma
Kat Williams

Research Data Management (RDM)

Emilie Altman
Danica Evering
Isaac Pratt (on leave)

Research Impact (RI)

Jeff Demaine
Jack Young

CIPP Evaluation

Kestrel McNeill
Katie Sonier

Information Security for Researchers (IS4R)

Greg Atkinson
Miro Cika
Danny Johnston

Research Software Development (RSD)

Dave Beardwood
Ola Hejazi
Kelvin Lee
Elias Eid





Key Functions

Engage with the community

- ❖ Identify needs, gaps, opportunities for collaboration
- ❖ Co-create a vision for coordinated digital research support

Develop shared resources, services, communities

- ❖ Research Data Management, Research IT Security, Research Impact, Research Software Development, Online Data Collection

Provide researchers a single support interface

- ❖ Compile and present information about local, provincial, or national services and training opportunities
- ❖ Deliver support services to help researchers find what they need

Assess our approach

- ❖ Continually assess and refine the pilot – during and after





The DRCP at work

- Digital Research Workshop Series
- Training Modules: Research Software Development & IT Security for Researchers
- Transcription guidance document
- M365 resources for researchers
- REDCap working group
- Project-for-the-web proof of concept
- Data and software management plans

Read our Fall 2023 Progress Report:

<https://u.mcmaster.ca/Fall2023>



The current state of digital research support at McMaster

McMaster's Evolving Digital Research Support Landscape

(Version 1.0; Fall 2023)

A report by the
Digital Research Commons Pilot (DRCP)



Digital Research
Commons Pilot
askresearch.mcmaster.ca

This report is shared with the McMaster research community for review and comment and will be updated periodically as additional feedback and new information is collected.

Please use this form: <https://u.mcmaster.ca/drcp-feedback> (survey opens November 8, 2023) to provide feedback. Information collection for this period ends December 31st, 2023.





Themes

1. Organization and coordination of services
2. Alignment of research support provision with researcher practices
3. Discovery of digital research support services
4. Access to digital research support services
5. Availability of resources and training





Theme #1: Organization and coordination of services

The decentralized and uncoordinated nature of digital research support has led to operational inefficiencies and confusion regarding support offerings.

"I don't know where to begin to find the digital research information I need."

The lack of a central mechanism to gather information on researcher needs hinders support units' ability to allocate resources.

"I would like to know more about other service providers so we could coordinate better."





Theme #2: Alignment of research support provision with researcher practices

Researchers and service providers have contrasting practices and expectations pertaining to the provision of digital research support.

These contrasting practices and expectations contribute to the underutilization of McMaster's digital research supports.

"I need to balance my research and institutional obligations."

"I have limited resources and capacity to deliver digital research support."





Theme #3: Discovery of digital research support services

Decentralized and uncoordinated service delivery results in a digital research support landscape that is difficult to navigate.

Researchers may find it difficult to find/access reliable assistance, and they may direct their inquiries to incorrect support units or abandon their search altogether.

“I don’t know what’s available. I don’t know how to get what I need.”





Theme #4: Access to digital research support services

Some researchers face larger barriers accessing digital research support due to variations in funding availability, service offerings across faculties, technical expertise, and research types/goals/values.

Researchers may avoid certain support units, seek support elsewhere, or forgo certain types of support.

"I know which digital research resources I need but there are obstacles in my way."





Theme #5: Availability of resources and training

Several critical gaps in services, resources, and training were identified.

Some of these supports are already offered (at McMaster or externally).

Ideally, training programs can be customized to accommodate different audiences by role, skill level, discipline, and technical familiarity.

“There are digital research support resources missing from this menu.”





Summary of challenges

- **Researchers** face difficulties navigating the digital research support ecosystem to discover and access relevant services and resources.
- **Service providers** operate with varied and often incomplete understanding of researcher needs and the services and resources available elsewhere.
- **Administrators** have difficulty assessing the efficacy and efficiency of the distributed and uncoordinated support environment.





Opportunities for improvement

- Ongoing engagement and information collection
- Enhancing communications within the research community
- Realigning service priorities and operations
- Coordinating service delivery
- Improving awareness of digital research supports
- Engaging researchers at career milestones



Next steps & feedback





Next steps

- Engage with CRPs & RCIs to capture perspectives and identify digital research support offerings.
- Update current state of digital research support and draft a strategy that articulates a model for improved digital research support at McMaster, including the role that the DRCP can play.
- The DRCP will continue to build the foundations of a coordinating layer and to collaborate with partners across the institution to pilot resources and services.
 - Scoping of digital research support catalogue
 - Working on Resources for new members of the research community (with Faculty IT leads, RHPCS, MUL, UTS)
 - Development of a Software Licensing Catalogue: Phase 1 (with Faculty IT leads, RHPCS, MUL)





Your input & feedback!

- What, if anything, in this report particularly resonates with you?
- What aspects of this report do you disagree with or feel requires further characterization/contextualization?
- What have we missed in terms of service providers, issues, or opportunities?

Your feedback will be used to refine **these findings** and develop recommendations for improved digital research support and the DRCP's role going forward.

Please consider providing feedback via our survey:
u.mcmaster.ca/drcp-feedback (survey closes December 31, 2023)

