

Promoting the Open Access agenda through the use of Virtual Learning Environment

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abstract

A growing number of funding bodies, publishers and government organisations both in the UK and internationally are active stakeholders in the development of an Open Access environment in academia and beyond. While a movement that promotes a free and immediate access to scholarly materials and the removal price and accessibility barriers from the end user, nevertheless, the concept of openness is being brought to academia via complex regulations and policies (Research England, 2018).

The majority of the UK based research institutions carry out a broad selection of activities to promote an active engagement with the open agenda. However the mandatory nature of the open access policy set by funding bodies can be seen as one of the key factors leading to misinterpretation of the open access agenda and a source of its negative status amongst a large body of academic staff, who may see the engagement with Open Access as an unnecessary.

aims

Research Aims:

To look at the subjective experience of academic staff engaged with research with use of electronic resources.

To explore the users' journey whilst accessing the resources.

To explore how the electronic resources can be improved to enhance academic staff engagement with an open access agenda.

Research Question:

Does the blackboard site help to enhance scholars' engagement with the institutional repository and open access agenda?

methods

To address the local needs, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has been designed and distributed via diverse channels. A selection of the VLE platform users were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews.

Data gathered was analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) a qualitative approach to data analysis, which aims at identification of the themes 'patterns of meaning' across the dataset. Patterns are identified through a process of data familiarisation, data coding, theme development and revision.

Participants

Eight participants recruited in the study were employees of the University of Worcester at the moment of data collection. Participants have had a significant knowledge and experience in academia, however the level of their engagement with the Open Access agenda and understanding of it was different.

results

The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a valuable platform, which provides essential information, guidance and support for research culture at the University. Participants' accounts regarding the use of the VLE were positive, the resource has been praised for its clarity, balance, ease of use and overall users' experience.

The VLE is being used to promote Open Access agenda, a tool that has become rooted in participants' consciousness, it is being seen as an integral part of scholarly activity. A tool that can be used to promote one's own research and enhance networking opportunities as well as a mechanisms that enables users to reach work produced by other people.

Nonetheless, due to irregular interaction with Open Access and an institution repository as well as complexity of Open Access policies and regulations, the world of open scholarly publishing can be seen as an administrative burden and may cause some anxiety amongst scholars.

Results demonstrated that the VLE can provide essential support, however it cannot be seen as a standalone tool, but should be considered as a supplement to a range of services that are already on offer by the repository team.



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