

Scope Review of the ORCC database (Scholarly Communications and Research Support Landscape database)

Background

This database was initially created in 2017 by the Open Research Competencies Coalition (ORCC) as a landscaping exercise and then updated in 2019 for use in a UKCORR Members Day workshop looking at the skills gap.

[ORCC](#) is an independent group with members drawn from a wide range of UK organisations that support scholarly communications and open research.

The purpose of the database is summarised by ORCC as follows:

'To highlight a range of introductory to in depth training and development opportunities for colleagues who provide research support services in UK HEIs and research organisations. These services are usually based in libraries or research offices.'

It is aimed at individuals for self-development or for managers developing teams.

Current scope: subject areas

The current **subject** scope of the database is listed as follows:

- Open Access
- Research Data Management (RDM)
- Publishing
- Institutional repositories
- Copyright
- Bibliometrics

Training formats include:

'A range of free and paid options, brief or in depth, provided mainly by the community or professional bodies'

- Face to face training from organisations delivering courses
- Online training – including webinars, courses, guides and toolkits
- Conferences – established events for attendance, contribution or following
- Peer support organisations
- Competencies frameworks
- Key organisations

Each of the above options is listed on a separate tab on the database.

F2F training providers	Online training providers	Recurring Conferences	Peer support	Frameworks	Units
------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------	--------------	------------	-------

Figure 1: current worksheet tabs

Maintenance:

It was intended that the database was to be reviewed annually to check currency and links. Suggestions and amendments were to be submitted via a form, but this workflow was not implemented.

Review of current scope

- The database aims to ‘highlight’ selected resources, rather than provide a comprehensive list;
- Resources can be at any level, reflecting the UKCORR membership base;
- Additions are suggested by others working in the same field, so the database performs a peer-to-peer support role, which fits the remit of UKCORR;
- The subject coverage reflects the aims outlined in the [UKCORR Constitution](#) (2020): ‘To facilitate sharing of information, and offer networking and support opportunities in **open research (open access, open data, open science) and good research practice**’;
- Training resources listed are from non-commercial providers, with the inclusion of some local sources, e.g. [Claire Sewell’s website](#), which would not necessarily be included on other databases with a wider scope;
- The small scale of the database works in its favour as it is easily accessible;
- Level of detail is inconsistent across the database.

Observations and recommendations

1. The database performs a peer-to-peer support function for staff working in repositories or open research, which matches the remit of UKCORR. As such it would sit well on the UKCORR Knowledgebase, and could be greatly improved if the UKCORR membership were engaged to offer suggestions for new content. It is modest in ambition which makes it easily accessible for people who just require a straightforward list of recommended resources, and as such doesn’t duplicate the approach of resources like the [OA Directory wiki](#), [UKRN’s Open Research Resource Browser](#), or the [FAIRsFAIR Competence Centre](#).
2. The subject scope is in line with UKCORR’s aims as stated in the constitution, and therefore should remain broadly the same (although PIDs, research integrity, reproducibility and digital humanities could be added to the current list if thought appropriate).
3. Resources listed should continue to include only those provided by community and professional bodies, rather than commercial companies.
4. Training formats and the level of detail relating to these should be reduced to enable easy maintenance and consistency of information.
5. Identifying face to face as opposed to online training has become more difficult with the move to hybrid ways of communicating, and many providers now offer a mixture of both, or change formats regularly. In terms of ongoing maintenance, identifying which courses are in person and which online is burdensome and so it is suggested that ‘F2F Training Providers’ and ‘Online Training Providers’ are combined into one list. Users can then investigate the suggestions on offer themselves, and use the website links to find the most up to date information on courses and formats.
6. Key recurring conferences could continue to be included, but not one-off or smaller events.
7. The ‘Units’ section could be renamed ‘Key Organisations’ so that it is more descriptive, and links to webpages should be included.
8. The ‘Frameworks’ section is slightly problematic – it is very helpful to have the frameworks listed in one place, but this is a difficult area to keep current without community engagement, due to range and specialist nature of the working groups who tend to produce these. If it is retained, renaming it ‘Competencies’ would give a clearer indication of what it shows, and allow for a broader remit.
9. It is recommended that the ‘Peer Support’ section is removed, due to the local nature of the groups – on investigation it was discovered that many of the groups listed have now disbanded. Local groups tend not to have webpages either, which makes providing contact details problematic.

10. Overall, there are inconsistencies in the level of detail recorded in each sheet, and the maintenance required should be as 'light-touch' as possible, given that additions and revisions would be carried out by volunteers who in part rely on the good-will of their employers. The list should probably remain curated, with a 'locked' version mounted on the Knowledgebase, in order to avoid it becoming unwieldy and make sure entries are within scope.
11. The list should continue to be reviewed yearly, with quarterly additions, and amendments to be carried out when time permits. A submission system for recommendations/amendments featuring a form mounted on the UKCORR webpage could be implemented, with a low-maintenance workflow as follows:
 - Form with new suggestion received
 - Suggestion added to database in a publicly accessible and unmoderated 'latest suggestions' sheet (automatically if possible or manually by UKCORR sub-group but with no/minimal checks made)
 - UKCORR sub-group periodically checks, clears out or moves suggestions onto a more appropriate sheet for the longer term (aim to do this quarterly).
12. In order to promote the database and increase community engagement, it would be useful if a new section could be added to the UKCORR Knowledgebase homepage, perhaps called something like 'Recommended resources for learning and development' to provide a 'user-friendly' interface to the database itself. The title of the database could be changed to match.

The Knowledgebase is where the UKCORR community can share key resources to assist both in their every day work and also to learn about new developments in the sector. All members of UKCORR can access the resources through Google Docs and are free to add content to the Knowledgebase to share across our community.



Figure 2: current sections on Knowledgebase

13. This 'introductory page' could include all of the information currently housed on the first page of the database: outlining the aim and scope, inviting people to contribute recommendations/amendments via the form (also mounted on this page), providing a link to the database, and perhaps listing some core recommended resources (revised only occasionally), and highlighting new ones. Complementary databases such as [OA Directory](#), [wiki](#), [UKRN's Open Research Resource Browser](#), and the [FAIRsFAIR Competence Centre](#) could also be signposted on this page.

14. Once complete, the database could be publicised on the UKCORR list with an invitation to contribute a suggestion, and a link to the introductory webpage. A blog post could also be written to increase awareness, perhaps framed as the outcome of UKCORR member suggestions from the Sept 2019 workshop. Alison still has the notes from this.

Summary of main recommendations

<i>Remove the 'Introduction' section of the database, and transfer the information to a new webpage on the Knowledgebase called something like 'Recommended resources for learning and development'. Change the title of the database to match.</i>
<i>Broaden the subject scope to include PIDs, research integrity, reproducibility and digital humanities.</i>
<i>Rename the 'Frameworks' section 'Competencies', to allow a broader scope.</i>
<i>Rename the 'Units' section 'Key organisations.'</i>
<i>Remove the 'peer-support' tab.</i>
<i>Amalgamate the 'F2F Training Providers' and 'Online Training Providers' into one section to make yearly checking easier.</i>
<i>Simplify the information to make reviews easier, and include a link for every entry.</i>
<i>Create a suggestions/amendments form and publicise on the UKCORR list.</i>
<i>Display a 'locked' version on the website, so that live amendments cannot be made.</i>
<i>Review suggestions quarterly, and the entire list yearly, with amendments and corrections when time permits.</i>
<i>Publicise on the list, and write a blog post.</i>

Tracy Colborne, November 2021