eResearch Australasia 2009, who CAIRSS?

Kate Watson has reminded me to blog about the eResearch Australasia conference held in November from a CAIRSS perspective. What's going on in eResearch that university repository managers should be aware of?

Here's my top five things to think about in order of urgency, with 1 being the most immediate and five being a longer-term consideration:

1. **Look at what other CAIRSS sites are doing with eResearch and data.** There were some great examples of different thinking about how IRs fit into eResearch at the workshop on data management run by QUT and CSIRO, with appearances from some familiar faces from the IR world talking about their institutional planning for data management: Institutional approaches to data management support: exploring different models. We're interviewing for a new one-year position at USQ for an ANDS/CAIRSS liaison person to help bring these stories to the CAIRSS community, start to put up resources for data management on the CAIRSS site and help the IR community keep in contact with ANDS.

2. **Consider RIF-CS**, the new ANDS-developed metadata format for describing data collections.

   > The Registry Interchange Format - Collections and Services (RIF-CS) Schema was developed as a data interchange format for supporting the submission of metadata to a collections service registry.
   > http://ands.org.au/resource/rif-cs.html

   This format is something that will be important to those IRs which end up hosting data collections and/or or metadata about data collections. I am encouraging the ANDS team to hold at least one meeting for the developers and metadata specialists in the repository community to tell us the background to this schema, and go through the thinking behind the design. (I know there's a workshop about deploying the new standard, Gumboots for the Data Deluge: defining and describing collections for the Australian Research Data Commons, but I am thinking more about one that might (a) convince us why we need a new standard by explaining the thinking behind its design and (b) take input into future directions for the standard).

3. **Think about the Australian Access Federation**. It's still rolling out, apparently. I have always been quite sceptical about some of the more complicated use-cases involving role-based authorisation to repository resources, but I think the current AAF story is a bit more believable; I wrote about promising developments in the Australian Access Federation on my blog. Repository managers, it would be worthwhile checking with your local IT department if you are not already in the AAF. And if you have any IR requirements to lock-down content for AAF users then let Tim McCallum the CAIRSS techie know and we'll see what we can do to help.

4. **Looking beyond the kinds of interfaces** we're using now there was a wonderful presentation from Mitchell Whitelaw of new visualisation techniques for navigating large data sets: Exploring Archival Collections with Interactive Visualisation. This was a revelation to me, seeing a word-cloud linked to a dynamic visualisation. Do yourself a favour and check out the A1 explorer Screencast. In the same session Duncan Dickinson from our team at USQ showed some early work we have done on bringing data capture down to the desktop with The Fascinator, Creating an eResearch Desktop for the Humanities. We'll definitely be looking at how we can let you use Mitchell's tools over *your* data.

5. **Get ready for web-scale annotation services** as part of the scholarly communications process. I missed the presentation on Universal Collaborative Annotations with Thin Clients – Supporting User Feedback to the Atlas of Living Australia but I heard about it from a few people. The team here at ADFI was inspired to plug the open source tools released by UQ into our ICE publishing system as part of ICE week and The Fascinator (it you're technically inclined you can try it out). It's early days yet but I think that the standards behind these systems will be key to a new world of peer-review, thesis examination and public participation in scholarship not to mention collaboration on document authoring, assignment marking and thesis supervision.

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