

International collaboration and value: working with OpenAIRE

Focus

This case study focusses on the collaboration between IRUS-UK and OpenAIRE. It highlights how:

- IRUS-UK expertise helped OpenAIRE implement their usage statistics service and provide item type COUNTER reports for the OpenAIRE usage statistics
- IRUS-UK represents UK repositories in OpenAIRE. Working with IRUS-UK increases the efficiency of OpenAIRE as the usage statistics from the majority of UK repositories can be gathered through the IRUS-UK API
- both services collaborate on international committees to contribute to the ongoing standardisation of usage statistics.

Introduction

IRUS-UK is a standards-based statistics aggregation service, enabling UK universities to share and compare information about usage of items in their institutional repositories. Conforming to the COUNTER standard, statistics are consistent and comparable to enable benchmarking of repository usage at a national level. The standards-based approach that IRUS-UK pioneered is easily replicable and has been adopted more broadly. As such, IRUS-UK is now part of a family of services that include instances for CORE, OpenAIRE, University of Amsterdam and OAPEN, in addition to pilot services in Australia, New Zealand and the US.

IRUS-UK collaboration with OpenAIRE

OpenAIRE (<https://www.openaire.eu/>) is an initiative supported by the European Commission with the general remit to implement EC Open Access and Open Data policies and mandates http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-pilot-guide_en.pdf).

Initially funded in 2009 the current phase, OpenAIRE-Advance (Advancing Open Scholarship), consolidates its achievements of a successful infrastructure, comprised of a human network and robust technical services, while working to shift the momentum among its communities to Open Science, aiming to be a trusted e-Infrastructure within the realms of the European Open Science Cloud. It strives to empower its National Open Access Desks (NOADs) so they become a pivotal part within their own national data infrastructures, positioning OA and open science onto national agendas. The capacity building activities bring together experts on topical task groups in thematic areas (including open policies and legal issues), promoting a train the trainer approach, strengthening and expanding the pan-European Helpdesk with support and training toolkits, training resources and workshops. It examines key elements of scholarly communication, i.e. co-operative OA publishing and next generation repositories, to develop essential building blocks of the scholarly commons.

How IRUS-UK collaborates with OpenAIRE

The purpose of IRUS-UK's collaboration with OpenAIRE is as a representative for UK repositories in the project as well as to advocate that established standards relating to usage statistics are adopted and followed. This includes the COUNTER Code of Practice, the Tracker protocol, NISO SUSHI and NISO SUSHI-Lite.

The overall OpenAIRE project is large and complex with the IRUS-UK team being part of the project that focusses on usage statistics services. IRUS-UK's involvement includes:

- Monthly task team meetings
- Supporting use of the Tracker protocol to gather usage data from UK repositories
- Supporting use of the SUSHI-lite API to expose usage stats on behalf of UK repositories
- Joint contribution to workshops and conferences

The IRUS-UK implementation of the COUNTER Tracker protocol is not used exclusively to gather OpenAIRE usage statistics. Currently an OpenAIRE implementation of the Tracker protocol designed to work with Matomo (formerly PIWIK) is also used to gather data from other European repositories. It's the intention to unify processes to ensure that there's a single Tracker implementation. OpenAIRE is working with the IRUS-UK team to achieve this by the end of 2018.

Benefits of collaboration for OAPEN and related partners

Jochen Schirrwagen, of Bielefeld University in Germany, is a technical partner of OpenAIRE and he outlined the benefits of working with IRUS-UK. Initially, IRUS-UK was acting as a consultant, advising OpenAIRE on how to implement their usage statistics service. OpenAIRE 'learnt a lot' from the depth of experience and expertise of the IRUS-UK team.

IRUS-UK is a knowledgeable, experienced and recognised expert team.

This informed the development of item type COUNTER reports for the OpenAIRE usage statistics.

Since then, as the IRUS-UK team are part of international standards decision making, IRUS-UK has had a stronger collaborative role with OpenAIRE. For instance, working together in the Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR) working groups to align: open metrics and technical developments; and controlled vocabularies - all of which contribute to the standardisation of usage statistics.

The nature of the collaboration between IRUS-UK and OpenAIRE is that of working alongside of each towards the same aim. For example, OpenAIRE benefits from IRUS-UK's membership of the COUNTER working group on robot filtering and detection as this aids the analysis of tracking data.

Another important benefit and where we think we can have synergies in our daily work is that of the COUNTER Working Group on robot filtering and detection because IRUS-UK needs to analyse tracking data to identify robots and OpenAIRE needs to [do] the same ...

At a more practical level, working with IRUS-UK increases the efficiency of OpenAIRE as the usage statistics from the majority of UK repositories can be gathered through the IRUS-UK API. Jochen Schirrwagen comments:

It reduces the effort to contact each repository manger when IRUS-UK can do this for the UK and OpenAIRE just needs to retrieve the COUNTER reports from the IRUS API. That is very helpful.

Finally, Jochen Schirrwagen believes that the collaboration with IRUS-UK is so successful because of the expertise that IRUS-UK can offer with both services complementing each other.

We want and we do collaborate and do complement our data and complement our services and IRUS-UK, in my impression, is always a few steps in advance, more developed and provides lots of best practice where other services and initiatives that want to implement something similar can learn from.



Future developments

It is anticipated that in the near future there is the potential that IRUS-UK will benefit from usage statistics gathered globally by OpenAIRE. IRUS-UK is working with OpenAIRE on a technical level to implement usage statistics services in other countries, which would enable comprehensive and comparable statistics. This would have “the real benefit that usage statistics can be supported in nearly all open access repositories worldwide”.

OpenAIRE are aiming to carry out further work to create a balance between usage statistics of open access items and those of subscribed items. This aim is closely aligned to the original aims of the PIRUS project, the predecessor to IRUS-UK. Currently, on the one hand there are openly available usage statistics based on the COUNTER Code of Practice and on the other, standardised COUNTER reports from publishers who do not make their statistics openly available. It would be useful to compare these statistics in order to see usage differences between open access items and those with subscriptions and that of different publishing platforms for example between repositories and open access journals.

OpenAIRE are working with IRUS-UK on the possible development of a Usage Statistics Hub, which would exchange COUNTER conformant usage statistics. This would require a single point of contact or API for statistics from a range of sources. This work is ongoing in 2018 aiming to provide a prototype and demonstrate the added value of such a global service in the near future.

Summary

The IRUS-UK/OpenAIRE collaboration is an example of how IRUS-UK works with different organisations, not only with UK institutional repository members. In this case, the expertise and technical knowledge of the IRUS-UK team is being put to use, not only in a pancontinental project, but also to contribute to global initiatives for open access. This is an example of IRUS-UK contributing to the standardisation of open access protocols to ensure high quality data and resources in the open access world.

