



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

The Journal of Academic Librarianship



Occupational Sub-Cultures, Jurisdictional Struggle and Third Space: Theorising Professional Service Responses to Research Data Management

E. Verbaan, A.M. Cox *

The Information School, University of Sheffield, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 January 2014

Accepted 25 February 2014

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Research data management

Academic libraries

IT services

Research administration

Occupational sub-culture

Third Space

ABSTRACT

Effective Research Data Management (RDM) is becoming an increasing concern in UK universities as a result of mandates from research funders. The study explored the usefulness of theories of occupational sub-culture, jurisdictional struggle and Third Space to understand how librarians, IT staff and research administrators view developing services to support RDM. Data were collected through 20 semi-structured interviews with staff in the Library, IT services and Research Office of a research intensive university in Northern England.

The notion of occupational sub-culture directs attention to the different ways professional services view RDM. Broadly speaking, IT Services focussed on short term data storage; Research Office on compliance and research quality; librarians on preservation and advocacy. In terms of Abbott's theories, the Library was the only department claiming a new jurisdiction in RDM. This could be seen as an extension of its existing jurisdiction in Open Access and Information Literacy. The other departments claimed to be short of resources to take on such a complex project. Some interviewees feared RDM might be risky and demand lots of resources. Third Space theory is a powerful way to think about roles that might emerge in a new intra-professional space as RDM services become a reality.

© 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

As a significant output of research, data are costly to produce yet valuable if they can be reused (Borgman, 2012). In a digital world they are being created in increasing quantity. Research data types are very diverse: from sensory data collected in the field, secondary data created dynamically in simulations, to interview recordings or image databases. Even within a single discipline the types and standards of data are diverse. Data can also be complex because of how they are generated in research collaborations and through the use of collaborative research tools. Yet they are fragile: if not enough metadata are recorded about how the data were created and what the different fields in the dataset mean, they cannot be re-used. Also, many people believe open data is the key to research quality and scientific progress (Royal Society, 2012). Yet if they do not have enough discovery metadata associated with them, data cannot be re-found for reuse.

Increasing recognition of these issues has led funders in the UK to mandate better research data management (RDM) (RCUK, 2011; Pryor, 2012). RDM "concerns the organisation of data, from its entry to the research cycle through to the dissemination and archiving of valuable results" (Whyte & Tedds, 2011). Research funding applications

now require data management plans. A critical event in raising the priority of the RDM agenda in the UK was the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) asking all UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to formulate a roadmap by May 2012 that outlined how they would fully comply with the new RDM requirements by May 2015.

Although there are a number of national and international data repositories (RIN, 2011) there are many subjects which do not have a dedicated data archive. The funders place the responsibility for RDM on researchers and their institutions (Jones, Pryor, & Whyte, 2013; Pryor, Jones, & Whyte, 2014). Indeed, evidence from recent surveys (e.g. Cox & Pinfield, 2013; Corral, Kennan, & Afzal, 2013) suggests that in the UK, academic libraries are taking on or planning a range of roles in RDM, as part of a wider movement to offer more support to research in general (Auckland, 2012). Roles have been identified in the areas of: policy; advice and signposting; training; auditing of research assets and creation of institutional data repositories (Monastersky, 2013; Corral, 2012; Cox, Verbaan, & Sen, 2012; Lyon, 2012; Alvaro, Brooks, Ham, Poegel, & Rosencrans, 2011; Lewis, 2010; Gabridge, 2009). This work could be spread across a number of library teams, e.g. the liaison team, metadata specialists, special collections, and systems.

Yet it is also clear that a number of other professional services will be involved in supporting RDM, particularly research administrators and computing services, as well as involving researchers themselves (Jones et al., 2013; Hodson & Jones, 2013). No one single service has the skills or capacity to take on the whole support role. Little has been

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: a.m.cox@sheffield.ac.uk (A.M. Cox).

written about the differing responses among professional services to the new RDM agenda and how such professional services will work together. Understanding the dynamics behind how they work together is critical to interpreting what are likely to be successful organisational arrangements. This is relevant to managers and individual professional support staff themselves. RDM can be a case study to increase our understanding of the information profession and its relation to adjacent professions. This paper reports a study that begins to address the gap in the literature by evaluating a number of potential theoretical frameworks for interpreting professional relationships around RDM, applied to a body of interview material from one institution in the early days of RDM service development.

The paper is laid out as follows. It begins by discussing three potential theoretical resources: occupational sub-cultures, Abbott's theory of the professions, and the concept of Third Space. The first two are theories widely applied to explore the nature and relations between professions. The third is a relatively new approach that has intriguing implications for how work changes where clear professional boundaries dissolve. It considers what we know about the professional communities of librarians, research administrators and computing services. After introducing the methodology of the study, the findings from thematic analysis of the interviews are laid out and then discussed in relation to the theoretical literature.

THEORETICAL RESOURCES

This section considers the relation between three potential theoretical frameworks for looking at professional services' responses to RDM. The first is through conceiving of them as driven by differences in occupational sub-cultures within organisations. The occupational cultures of librarians, computing services staff and research administrators will shape both their view of RDM and how they might collaborate or compete to support it. Such cultures are usually considered to consist of an invisible set of shared values and an observable set of "practices" (Hofstede, 1991) or "forms" (Trice, 1993) that express these shared values (Cain, 2003). Authors differentiate between professional sub-cultures, which refer to a profession within an organisation, and professional cultures, which transcend the boundaries of the organisation (Guzman, Stam, & Stanton, 2008; Hofstede, 1998; Trice, 1993). Within an organisation there is a tension between the professional sub-cultures and the values and purposes of the organisations itself. There is also scope for conflicts between the various occupational sub-cultures due to their different beliefs and value systems. It may be that an occupation has strongly held belief systems that make it rigid and inflexible, or that they have cultural forms such as occupation-based stories in which others outside of the occupation are portrayed as dysfunctional stereotypes (Trice, 1993, p. 25). Such tensions can be resolved in a number of ways, including assimilation and accommodation.

The concept of conflict between professional groups is developed further in Abbott's (1988) work, which focuses on struggles between professional groups, not limited to a single organisation. This is our second potential framework for looking at responses to RDM. Abbott himself has written specifically about the information professions (1988; 1998) and others have used his theories, especially to examine librarianship's relationship to IT (Cox & Corral, 2013; O'Connor, 2009a; Ray, 2001; Danner, 1998; Van House & Sutton, 1996). According to Abbott, professions are in constant competition with one another because the environment in which they operate is continuously changing, e.g. due to social-cultural and technological change. Abbott's system of professions is "a world of pushing and shoving, of contests won and lost" (Abbott, 1998, p. 433). In essence, the theory states that professions seek to claim exclusivity over certain areas of work, for what Abbott labels "jurisdiction". Claims for jurisdiction can be made in three different ways:

1. through acquisition of power to license and regulate those who may perform in the area of work by means of a professional organisation,
2. through creating a public image that associates the profession with that area of work,
3. and through direct competition with other occupations and professions in the workplace.

Professions cannot occupy a jurisdiction "without either finding it vacant or fighting for it" (1998, p. 86): if there is a vacant jurisdiction – such as RDM – this will be a trigger for events in which adjacent professions dispute each other's jurisdiction. Such disputes can be resolved in a number of ways. For example, they can lead to either full jurisdiction for one profession, or to the subordination of a number of professions to another one. The dispute could also result in a stand-off that leads to a more or less equal division of the jurisdiction into interdependent parts. Abbott calls this a division of labour or a divided jurisdiction.

A third way of looking at areas of intersection between services and professions is through the concept of Third Space. The post-colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha, used the term Third Space to refer to the boundary zone in which two cultures meet, hybrid identities take shape, and new discourses are created. It is a site of competition between powers: "the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 218). Whitchurch (2008) has applied this concept to "the emergent territory between academic and professional domains" (p. 377). The blurring of boundaries of what academic and professional staff traditionally do, has opened up a new space where staff combine activities from both. What she calls "blended" professionals are recruited to appointments that cover both professional and academic domains, whilst "unbounded" professionals are actively trying to extend their roles beyond their given job descriptions, thus moving from their professional role into "the borders of academic space".

Third Spaces can be defined as spaces that "involve interactions between people who would not normally have worked together, where those interactions are focused on a shared (often novel) object (concept, problem, idea)" (McAlpine & Hopwood, 2009, p. 159). In the context of professional cultures in HEI, Third Space theory so far has only been applied to the continuum between non-academics and academics, not between the various professional services (with the exception of Ferguson & Metz, 2003, who applied it to the convergence of library and IT services). However, it could be fruitfully applied to the new area of Research Data Management, which is commonly understood as an area that cannot be undertaken by only one support service but is "shared" between them and with researchers themselves. RDM could be viewed as what Whitchurch (2012, p. 33–37) calls an *integrated* Third Space where projects are "explicitly recognised by the institution and embedded within organisational structures", as opposed to *semi-autonomous* (recognised but self-funded) and *independent* Third Spaces (not-recognised and self-funded).

Such Third Spaces can be seen both as an opportunity and a site of struggle. On the one hand, in-between spaces can "transcend difference" (for example differences in professional allegiance) and they can "support a variety of agendas" (Whitchurch, 2012, p. 22 and 23). In her writing Whitchurch tends to view Third Space as positive for those working in them. On the other hand, however, commentators describe Third Space as an arena where different cultures clash. Third Space can be "risky, threatening or dysfunctional" (op.cit., p. 84). Status is uncertain, career paths are complex, and relationships may be challenging. Shelley (2010) defines this "shifting arena" as "a shared space of tension".

Thus one theoretical resource for considering the response to RDM is the notion of differences in professional sub-cultures. Each of the professional groups involved in RDM has a different sub-culture. These lead to differing, possibly even incommensurable views of organisational problems and break downs in communication. This is

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6842303>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6842303>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)