# UKCoRR – At the Heart of the UK Open Access Repository Landscape

*Gareth J Johnson, Chair UKCoRR and LRA Manager, University of Leicester*[*gjj6@le.ac.uk*](mailto:gjj6@le.ac.uk)*, 0116-252-2310, @llordllama @ukcorr*

There are moments when the UK Council of Research Repositories (**UKCoRR**) seems to be the best kept secret in Britain. UKCoRR was founded as one of the outputs from the JISC Funded SHERPA Plus project1 run by the University of Nottingham in 2007. The purpose was to support the then nascent repository manager and staff community who lacked a central organisation that would offer them a collective voice. It was founded and continues to operate as a closed community. This was in response to the fact that the pre-existing open access community was frequently dominated by non-practitioner voices that had an historical tendency to dominate conversations, even on occasion treating questions of practical repository management as an irrelevancy.

## Membership

To become and remain a member of UKCoRR individuals need to be currently working as a repository practitioner, administrator or manager. The governing Committee are responsible for applying this ruling, and on occasion for considering membership applications from those outside of the strict definition of these criteria. Membership of UKCoRR centres on the JISCMAIL *UKCoRR-Discussion* list and is currently in excess of 260 members.

UKCoRR’s email group is a safe harbour and supporting community, run under Chatham House rules where no question or comment is regarded as an irrelevancy. For members the facility to have their issues discussed in confidence by a large gated community of like-minded individuals has often been noted as a particular strength of UKCoRR.

Membership of UKCoRR has always been cost neutral, noted as another key organisational USP for the membership. For the Committee it can be seen as somewhat of a boon and a blessing. Free of funding management and audit requirements, the Committee are able to devote all available time to fulfilling the purposes for which UKCoRR was founded2. Conversely lacking funds means that the financial backing for member events or activities is entirely down to the grace and favour of hosting venue or sponsors. Thanks to a number of generous hosts these have been successfully run on a number of occasions at no cost to delegates attending or UKCoRR itself.

## Governance

In part due to the lack of funding UKCoRR is often referenced as an example of a light-weight, flexible and adaptable 21st Century organisation 2.0 entity. In part, and in recognition for the funding free achievements of UKCoRR over the years it was the recipient of the **2011 UKeig Jason Farradane Award**3.

UKCoRR is managed and advanced by an executive Committee, currently comprising of 5 officers with identified responsibilities4. The lack of funding limits the ability of the Committee to meet face to face to at most once or twice a year. However, regular monthly telcons are held at the Chair’s instigation to ensure that progress and activities continue, as well as frequent and active electronic communication to deal with most interim matters.

At this time of writing the Governance is undergoing a period of mild change, to allow for enhancements to the operational efficiency of the organisation and Committee alike. This need in part emerged from the membership survey of 20115, and was followed up at events and in discussions on and around the membership distribution list.

One of the longest running, and perhaps slightly trivial, debates during the formative years of the organisation was the correct pronunciation of the acronym – *UK-Core* or *U-Core*. In recent years the Committee has standardised on UK-Core, to stress the UK wide nature and activity of the group.

## Collective Voice

As well as membership meetings UKCoRR provides as a collective, unified and independent voice to stakeholders in scholarly communications, and from stakeholders back to the membership6. There are also regular requests from researchers working in the field of scholarly communication to canvas the opinions and insight of the UKCoRR membership; which is negotiated and facilitated as appropriate by the Committee.

Given their support for the open access agenda in the UK there has been a frequent interface with the JISC and many of their related programmes and projects. Committee members also sit on some of the committees and steering groups for these projects such as **UK Repository Net+***7*. There is also interaction both formal and informal with other organisations including EThOS, Jorum, SCONUL and to a limited degree elements of CILIP as well. In this way the Committee helps assure that outputs, activities and services from these bodies will more closely meet the practical needs of the repository worker community.

One of the closest relationships UKCoRR has enjoyed is with the **Research Support Project** (RSP)8, itself a successor to the SHERPA-Plus project. At the time of writing after over half a decade of work providing a funded extensive training and awareness programme the future of the RSP is currently unclear. Given the lack of funding that UKCoRR runs on there is no possibility of the organisation taking on the entirety of RSP’s portfolio of activity for the UK repository community. However, UKCoRR is already considering the role it can play in this new community landscape in supporting its members’ needs.

## Community Activity

While much of UKCoRR is a closed community, given the open access nature of most members’ jobs there is a willingness to share experience, challenge assumptions or simply engage with the wider community in a public forum. To this end the organisation maintains a blog on which the Committee and occasionally invited guest authors post. Public statements of position from UKCoRR, such as opposition to the US Research Works Act or issues of concern over the RCUK’s open access policy proposals appear here9. UKCoRR also conducts infrequent but valuable practitioner research into areas as diverse as electronic theses management10 and repository metrics11.

Part of raising the concerns of the membership with the broader stakeholder community requires that UKCoRR itself becomes more recognised outside of repository circles. To this end in the past year it has engaged on an increasing advocacy and marketing strategy, approaching organisations and individuals perhaps on the periphery of the repository managers world but never-the-less ones with whom collaboration or discussion would prove profitable to the organisation and membership alike. As a result it has also entered into a memorandum of understanding with Japan’s **Digital Repository Federation** (DRF)12, and has explored relationships with the **Coalition of Open Access Repositories** (CORE)13.

## Future

The world of scholarly communications and open access continues to evolve and as such repository workers will continue to require support and representation from a professional organization dedicated to their needs. Planned developments to UKCoRR’s governance and Committee structure coming into effect in 2013 will help the organisation to continue to meet the challenge of supporting our members working lives, professional development needs and exchange of experience.

## References

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